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Global Migrations, Old Forms of Labor, and New Transborder Class Relations

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Abstract

With the labor market fed by international migrations, global capitalism has seen a resurgence of archaic forms of labor in certain industries since the 1970s. The old capitalist strategy of employing multiethnic workforces has resurfaced in seafaring and transnational construction, which rely mainly on migrant male workers. In Western economies, the hiring of servants was thought to be a thing of the past, but today female migrants are widely employed as paid domestic workers. In industrializing Asia, the hiring of foreign domestic workers has also surged. Despite appearances, these old labor forms indicate a new set of contradictions directly implicated in the structuring of transnational social class and status relations. States play instrumental roles as labor recruiters and as users of migrant labor with few citizenship rights. The tighter interconnectedness of the global economy and of class practices notwithstanding, labor migrations deepen national attachment and reinforce the view of class structures as fundamentally national formations. This phenomenon is examined from the perspective of the Philippines.

Keywords: international migration, nationalism, transnationalism, class formation, the state, domestic work, seafaring, construction industry

Globalization is not new, although as the grand narrative of our time it is. More than at any other historical period, the interconnectedness of otherwise distant and disparate parts of the world is increasingly being recognized. Social relations, networks and institutions are at present consciously structured and nurtured with the spherical earth as the frame of reference. The multiple forces of globalization define the material and ideational parameters within which economic, political, cultural and ecological practices, identities, and relations are contested, redefined, reconstituted, and transformed [Held *et al.* 1999]. However, after 11 September 2001 the vision of a singular world society with a shared global culture has been buried in the realization that the world remains deeply fractured by ideological chasms that are created and reinforced by the very same contradictory processes that propel globalization [Mann 2001].

The world is divided not only by ideational factors. The “global village” is uneven in

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both geographic and social terms. The global interstate system is profoundly asymmetrical, and the territorial domains of nation-states suggest a highly unequal economic geography. The world is also hierarchically stratified by inequalities of social class and status positions. In social theory class structures have been conceptualized conventionally in “national” terms: despite the historical and structural linkages of economies and states, every nation-state has been theorized in terms of a specific and autonomous social class formation. The narratives and practices of contemporary globalization, however, call attention to the structuring of class relations across state boundaries. As “national” class structures are intermeshed, transnational class relations make patent that global contradictions penetrate the local, even as the local forms an integral part of the global. The extreme unevenness that characterizes the world is made visible in local class hierarchies that are incomprehensible apart from the global.

That local and global class relations are mutually determinative is crystallized by processes of international transborder migrations. But although the causal forces attending migration flows around the world have been widely analyzed from political, economic and cultural perspectives, the complex relationships that entangle social classes with population movements have not received a commensurate analytical focus. The preponderance of “push-pull” theories of migration has led to the relative neglect of William McNeill’s [1978] early stress on the need to analyze human migratory processes in terms of “elites” and “masses.” To bring to the fore the dimension of social classes in on-going global migrations, this article focuses on forms of the labor process that can be regarded as “traditional” but, on closer inspection, indicate social relations and class contradictions distinctive of the late twentieth century. By focusing on these seemingly archaic labor forms—which surged with the rise of neoliberalism and deregulation in the 1970s—this article proposes that international migrations are implicated in processes of class formation and change that cut across state boundaries. These processes are inherently contradictory: they reinforce national sentiments and perpetuate the myth of social class structures as exclusively “national,” thus weakening transnational solidarities. At the same time, the transborder oppositional relationship between state and migrant labor is becoming patent. Issues surrounding this immense and complex field are explored from the vantage point of Southeast Asia, particularly the Philippines.

Differential Views of Transborder Migration

Both a cause and a consequence of globalization, international migration has elicited a wide range of views that are often contingent on one’s social-structural position in any given country, and that country’s position in the world system. Reversing the lull of the interwar years, international and intraregional migrations have seen tremendous acceleration in the postwar period, especially since the 1960s [Held *et al.* 1999: 311–312; Zolberg

1997]. The departure of members from origin-states and the arrival of “aliens” and “strangers” in destination-states have prompted struggles over national identity, which sometimes absorb different classes and social groups within the polity in fierce debates. But contestations over culture are never far from economic and political considerations. These seemingly separate domains are inextricably intertwined. Thus, migration is embedded in wider social, cultural, political, ecological and economic processes that suffuse the world system [Zolberg 1978; Sassen 1998]. In Europe, for instance, questions regarding the nature of the welfare state and of citizenship have been inseparable from issues of nationhood, race, and Europeaness. As Etienne Balibar [1991: 16] avers, the resurgence of racism in Europe owes to the current ambiguities in the state-form, which is national but straddles a supranational matrix. Europe’s transitional state-form projects the image of, at once, “an over-powerful and powerless machine” that opens borders to illicit labor but is unable to control those borders.

In the United States immigrant scholars celebrate the transnation and the freedom from what are seen as the confining politics, parochial concerns and rigid constraints of the nation-state, with Arjun Appadurai [1993] as an exemplary case. Others hail transnationalism as affording immigrants, constrained by racism in the destination-state, to be continually involved in the nation-building of their adopted countries as well as their homelands despite the physical distance [Basch *et al.* 1994]. But transnationality may be viewed differently from the other side. In the Philippines, public intellectuals have portrayed permanent immigrants in North America as buying the “American dream” and turning their backs on the nation, remittances and other transnational links notwithstanding [Vergara 1996]. Depending on the position of the intellectual, on one side of the globe, immigrants are lauded as embodying autonomy and liberation; on the other side, they are disparaged as deserters, even traitors.

Moreover, in the Philippines, middle class emigrants who move to advanced capitalist countries typified by the United States are often juxtaposed to labor migrants from middle and lower classes who work contractually in a range of destinations around the world. While the former are stereotypically seen as settling into a life of ease, comfort and abundance, labor migrants evoke pity for enduring hardship and separation from kin to eke out a living. Whereas permanent immigrants are portrayed as privileged, labor migrants are cast in the role of the unfortunate and the sacrificial. But the distinctions between these two groups are oftentimes vague. Even the divide in the duration of stay overseas may be far from sharp. Technically, labor migrants on fixed-term contracts are unlike permanent immigrants because they are obliged by the terms of their employment to return to the homeland after a specified period of work. Nevertheless, labor migrants are often able to stay in their country of employment for an extended period in a manner that transforms them into semi-permanent emigrants. In some parts of Europe labor migrants have become permanent residents and may even have undergone naturalization.

Within the homeland, views differ on the meanings and ramifications of permanent immigration and contract labor migration, both of which gained momentum in the 1970s. State actors have raised labor migrants on a pedestal as heroes of the nation, who shore up the Philippine economy through remittances that 2001 Central Bank figures indicate amounted to over US\$6.2 billion [Cabungcal 2002]. In October 2002 the economic bounty translated into the passage by both chambers of the Philippine Congress of separate versions of an absentee voting bill. Signed by the president into law on 13 February 2003, the final legislation allows the overseas Filipino electorate to cast votes for president, vice-president, senators and party-list representatives in the 2004 elections, subject to mandatory review in 2006 [*BusinessWorld* 2003; *INQ7.net* 2003a]. Also in October 2002, the Philippine Senate passed a bill on the dual citizenship rights of natural-born Filipinos, an unprecedented move that underscores the state's instrumentalist approach to citizenship [Aguilar 1999].

The positive, if expedient and opportunistic, stance of state actors toward migrant workers is in marked contrast to the view of many members of the middle and upper classes who regard the migrants' low-status jobs as a source of national shame and dishonor. These comfortable classes feel demeaned that the Philippines has gained a worldwide reputation as a provider of low-status workers, a status that by association debases them as well because of shared nationality [Aguilar 1996; Tadiar 2002]. In 1998, for instance, many protested against the inclusion of the word *Filipineza* (Filipina) in a Greek dictionary with its given meaning as "a domestic worker from the Philippines or a person [from any country] who performs non-essential auxiliary tasks" [*Philippine Daily Inquirer* 1998; Rufo and Digma 1998]. "Filipina" and "domestic work" have become reducible and interchangeable, to the chagrin of Filipino elites. For their part, activists take up the cudgels for labor migrants whom they see as victims of global and domestic structures of inequality and oppression, and as veritable slaves in the modern world. At the individual level, migrants endure the hardships of dislocation in pursuit of better incomes, personal autonomy, and a broader view of the world, while giving vent to brewing consumerist desires [Aguilar 2002b].

Perceptions of and reactions to transborder migrations are necessarily divergent because of differing social-structural positions within and across nation-states. Philippine middle classes feel concerned or embarrassed precisely because labor migrants appear on the world stage as a subordinate group engaged in "traditional" occupations of trifling value and status even by homeland standards. In the Philippines, the domestic worker is often no better than a downtrodden "maid" (*utusan*, *atsay*) or at best a lowly "helper" (*katulong*), most likely a poorly paid migrant from a remote rural area. Migrants' occupations are devalued because of their seeming backwardness and association with "undignified" and "non-essential" work, as if they have no role in contemporary modernity. A closer examination suggests otherwise.

The Reinvention of the Multiethnic Workforce

The increased circulation of migratory and ambulatory labor has been associated with the persistence and reinvention of seemingly obsolete and destined-to-disappear forms and relations in world capitalism. The redeployment of ancient practices has occurred particularly in activities that have undergone comparatively limited mechanization (as in paid domestic work) and in activities where some forms of labor power have been irreplaceable (as in seafaring). Old labor strategies have also been used in industries where capital is subject to spatial fixity (as in construction) and therefore physically unable to relocate to sources of cheap labor, an option otherwise available to manufacturing industries in the export processing zones of peripheral states [Gibson and Graham 2002].

These reinvented forms of labor relations, particularly in seafaring and construction, rely upon workers, principally male, drawn from different countries and pooled together in a common workplace. The workers' diversified origins offer possibilities for global solidarity; at the same time, however, the intersection of capitalist interests and national sentiments negate the prospects of such unity. In the global workplace cross-national alliances and friendships arise, but in the same breath national attachments are deepened. The global workplace graphically encodes the ideological tensions of capitalism that, as argued by Immanuel Wallerstein [1991], symbiotically link universalism to racism and sexism.

The practice of mobilizing persons from all sorts of "ethnic" backgrounds to serve as crew of ocean-going vessels is centuries old, antedating the nation-state. In business from the seventeenth to the eighteenth centuries, the Dutch VOC hired all sorts of poor European men to work as sailors and soldiers. Although not its original intention, the Netherlands East India Company "had to take what men they could get" to work as sailors, with the advantage that "the mixture of nationalities on board a ship lessened the chances of a successful mutiny being hatched among the men" [Boxer 1965: 71]. The mercenaries hired by the Company were an even more heterogeneous lot. Outnumbering Dutch soldiers were Germans, Swiss, Poles, English, Scots, Irish, Danes, Flemings, French, Japanese and other foreigners who manned the garrisons and defended Dutch ships [*ibid.*: 79–81]. These men formed the lower ranks of a global corporation, the wealthiest in its time, whose rendezvous point was Batavia on the island of Java, where a peculiarly Eurasian society emerged [Taylor 1983]. After the VOC's bankruptcy, the colonial army of the Dutch East Indies, which was organized in the 1830s and abolished in 1950, recruited a mix of soldiers who gave it the reputation as "the sink-hole of Europe" [Ming 1983: 65].

Joining the ranks of the world's paid seafaring workforce were men from the Spanish

Philippines, then known as Manilamen, who found employment aboard European and American merchant vessels in the nineteenth century. The seafaring crews of international merchant ships were multiethnic. Actively joining such crews were Manilamen who were found in a multitude of ports around the world, from Hong Kong, Singapore and Cape Town to London, New York and Philadelphia [López Jaena 1996: 31]. They enjoyed a “worldwide” reputation as “highly capable crewmen about merchant vessels” [MacMicking 1967: 31–32]. Writing in 1850, MacMicking [*ibid.*: 31] noted that the literacy of “the Manilla men serving on board of ships and composing their crews” was very impressive and “frequently remarked upon [even] by people very strongly prejudiced in favor of white men, and who despise the black skins of Manilla men.” While the Spanish colony they came from was only fitfully engaging with the world-system, these Manilamen were immersed in the vortex of global capitalism and represented the vanguard of an emerging national proletariat. As emblemized by seafarers in the late nineteenth century, the Philippine workforce was, in the first instance, global before it became national.

At present, the Philippines is the biggest provider of seafarers, accounting for about 16 percent of the world’s 1.2 million seafarers [Tyner 2002: 79]. Filipinos are thus ubiquitous in ports around the world. They are part of an international proletariat in the service of both transnational shipping capital and the nation-state that benefits from seafarers’ salaries a large chunk of which is subject to mandatory remittance. In 1982, the Philippine government ruled that 50 percent to 70 percent of all overseas workers’ salaries be remitted to the homeland, but only seafarers are likely to comply because, unlike other contract workers, their salaries are paid by manning agencies right in the Philippines [Rodriguez 1996: 154]. As labor exporter the Philippine state is a stakeholder in the global shipping industry [Tyner 2002].

Filipinos work alongside Bangladeshi, British, Croatian, Indian, Maltese, Polish, Swedish, and other workers on the sea lanes of the world, where the dynamics of a working class that is cosmopolitan and national-particularist are simultaneously played out. Viewed from one angle, shipping crews traverse international waters and constitute a workforce that literally transcends all political borders. On the same floating space are mingled different ethnic, national and racial affinities. Concomitantly, however, the system of nation-states and the workers’ own national sentiment fasten them to identifiable polities and homelands.

This heterogeneous workforce owes to the shipping industry’s deregulation since the 1970s. Owners have been able to register their vessels using so-called flags of convenience “to avoid the regulatory frameworks imposed by traditional maritime nations,” freeing them to “go global” in search of cheap labor [Sampson 2000]. The industry has surmounted the protectionist and racialized policies of “white” seamen’s unions that surfaced in the early twentieth century, such as those in Scotland from 1907 onwards [McFarland 1991]. Taking advantage of the socio-geographic disparities of world devel-

opment, shipping capital enforces differential wage rates that embody capital's marriage with racism, in a wage scale determined by seemingly innate attributes of the workers' cultural-national geo-economies of origin. Consequently, nationals of "First World" states receive higher returns to labor than their counterparts from "Third World" states. Survey data for 1992 suggest that the monthly earnings of a German "able seaman" were 19 times greater than that of a Bangladeshi; by 1995, Japanese able seamen earned 33 times more than Bangladeshis. The use of cheap labor has increasingly cut the global average wage, the 1999 figure of US\$1,318 being only three-quarters of the 1992 average [Kahveci 2003]. Despite data collection problems, the wage structure indicates that Americans and Britons earn substantially more than Filipinos, who are followed closely by Russians and Indians; beneath them are Bulgarians and, at the lowest, Bangladeshis [*ibid.*]. The reinvigorated universalism of sea transport capital, which allows for working class convergence across politico-cultural boundaries, works as a strategy to reduce the wage bill. On top of that, it obviates organized resistance, as in VOC days. With its multinational labor force, shipping capital thrives on disunity and harmony, cooperation and competition, fragmentation and stratification, as well as ethnic specialization.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the strategy of employing a multiethnic workforce was utilized in the pearl-shell industry in tropical Australia where Manilamen mingled, cooperated and competed with Japanese, Javanese, Malay, Melanesian and other divers and crew [Aguilar 2000]. The "non-white" divers served as a comparatively cheap labor pool, with Manilamen serving as a foil against what capitalists feared were the dangers of collusion possible in an all-Japanese crew [*ibid.*: 186]. The multilingual workforce constituted an "ethnological mosaic" that led an official to remark that "Amid all this racial diversity there is a well-maintained average of orderliness" [*ibid.*: 187]. But technological change overtook the pearl-shell industry and an overt racism took hold of Australia at the onset of federation in 1901, conjointly resulting in the industry's decline, the end of "non-white" immigration, and the temporary eclipse of pragmatic racism. But by no means did multiethnic work forces disappear in the world-system, and by no means did Filipinos cease to participate in them.

The advent of U. S. colonialism in the Philippines in 1898 resulted in a new stream of migration of Filipino workers systematically recruited to work in Hawaii's sugarcane plantations and in the U. S. Navy [Espiritu 2002]. Nationality, in conjunction with a racist template, was the pivot of identity struggles by labor migrants precisely because plantation capital deliberately utilized national sentiment as an input or raw material in the processes of production. In Hawaiian plantations, Filipino foremen, who were goaded to increase labor productivity by appealing to workers' national pride, urged their conationals to "do a good job and show the people of other nations what we can do. Let us not shame our skin" [*ibid.*: 93]. Cognizant of the gaze of apparently superior nations and races, the foremen's reference to "skin" exposed their own complicity in the racist strategies of capital. Apropos the labor market segmentation prevailing at that time, race

and nationality/ethnicity ranked the plantation workforce into a hierarchy in which managers were *haoles* (“whites”), foremen were Spaniards and Portuguese (the “whiteness” of southern Europeans being questionable [Bonnett 1998]), skilled workers were Japanese, and unskilled workers were Filipinos. This stratification was also evident in the segregated living quarters of employees. In the U. S. Navy, until as late as 1973 Filipino employees were restricted to menial positions such as officers’ stewards and mess attendants, a prolongation of many a Manilaman’s position in the late nineteenth century.

In the wake of the oil boom of the 1970s, the recruitment of migrant labor surged on an unprecedented scale in the Persian Gulf states as petrodollars led to widespread economic modernization that triggered a flurry of construction projects. Both state and capital came to prefer “Asians” to foreign Arabs at lower levels of the workforce. Non-Muslim workers from South to East Asia fit the bill of a docile labor force that poses minimal political and religious risks as they are not likely to espouse pan-Arabist ideals, exacerbate tensions among groups with different Islamic persuasions, and stake moral claims to citizenship. Asian migrants to Persian Gulf states have been easy “to regulate socially: racial distinctiveness made easier to enforce policies that segregated foreigners’ housing” [Margold 2002: 222].

In multinational companies located in the Persian Gulf region Filipinos have found employment as contractual engineers, drivers and construction workers. Their remuneration fits a multinational hierarchy of wages, in which Filipinos earn more than Bangladeshis but less than Koreans, who in turn earn less than American, British, French, Italian, and similar employees [Gibson and Graham 2002: 48]. Construction sites in the region have thus been agglomerations of multiracial workers subject to barracks-style regimentation in confined desert spaces. These sites resonate with images of colonial plantations devoted to rubber and palm oil production in remote parts of the Sumatran East Coast and of Cochinchina [Bremen 1989; Murray 1992]. Evidently, today’s global system of contracting migrant workers has replaced the nineteenth-century scheme of indentured labor, which in its time replaced slave and convict labor. Through the centuries different forms and regimes by which capital exploits mobile labor have evolved, the crudest aspects effaced, penal sanctions transferred from plantation capital to the state, and the commodification of labor power made more stark, but the underlying relations to extract the surplus product have persisted.

The Resurgence of Paid Domestic Work

A visibly pre-capitalist relation, domestic service as a form of labor rendered by non-family members has survived the industrial transformation of housework in advanced economies, and the practice is thriving remarkably well today. In preindustrial North-

west Europe, for instance, migratory “servants” were a ubiquitous feature of late eighteenth-century households. Some “servants” performed housework, but most participated in farming or craft activities, were generally young and unmarried, and lived as dependent members of their master’s household [Hajnal 1982: 470–475]. Servanthood was a specific stage in the lifecourse of European youth, who subsequently left the job to form households of their own. By the 1820s, as industrialization and urbanization gained momentum, real wages began to rise and servants became relatively more expensive, causing a decline in the proportion of the labor force accounted for by servants [Hoffman *et al.* 2002]. At about the same time, males, who constituted the elite of domestic service and fetched wages about double those of females, ceased to form a significant portion of domestic servants, a category that then became almost completely feminized. In addition to men opting for industrial work, the decline in male servants occurred as aristocratic employers, the usual hirers of male servants for their large household staffs, became fewer, outnumbered by urban middle-class employers among whom a single live-in maid was common [McBride 1976: 39–51]. The expanding new middle classes saw the demand for domestic workers peak in mid-century.

By the early twentieth century, income disparities in Western Europe had narrowed. Britain in the 1920s still counted over 1.2 million domestic servants, many of whom were female migrants from Ireland, but the shortage of servants already had been designated officially as a “problem” [Goodman and Redclift 1991: 7–8]. The eventual eclipse of paid domestic work occurred alongside the increasing rates of female participation in the formal labor force, the reinvention of the kitchen, the rise of home technologies, and the emergence of “eating out” and other household labor-saving strategies. These transformations occurred while food production itself was becoming a deeply globalized agro-industrial regime [Friedmann and McMichael 1989; Goodman and Redclift 1991]. In the colonies, however, European colonists would continue until the final fall of empires their peculiarly Orientalist practices of hiring male and female domestic workers, thereby protracting aristocratic pretensions, even as the hiring of servants in Europe itself was on the decline [Locher-Scholten 1994; Chin 1998: 69–78].

But the late twentieth century saw paid domestic service resurface with great force in “the West,” not as a mere vestige from the past but as an integral part of contemporary social formations. When Western economies acquired a postindustrial form beginning in the 1980s, labor migration ceased to be directed primarily at filling “menial jobs in the public services and dirty jobs in the manufacturing sector” as was the case in the 1950s and 1960s [Held *et al.* 1999: 304]. Instead, increasing numbers of migrants from other parts of Europe and from Africa, Asia, and Latin America have found employment in private service industries and domestic services. In the United Kingdom the amount spent on domestic workers quadrupled from £1.1 billion in 1987 to £4.3 billion in 1996 [Anderson 2000: 87].

Several factors explain this resurgence in paid domestic work. The aging population,

the pressure on working women, and the demand for comparatively cheap labor, for instance, have opened Canada's gates to immigrant women to work there as nannies and as home-based caregivers to the elderly. But caregiver workers from the Philippines are admitted on a "preimmigrant" status that renders their position "inferior" to landed immigrants [Pratt 2002]. In general, migrant domestic workers in Western economies are seen as substituting for the household-based social reproductive labor of local women, who are enabled to pursue careers and paid employment elsewhere. However, as Bridget Anderson [2000] points out, migrant domestic workers in Europe not only care for children and the elderly but also service the middle-class lifestyle of female employers. By passing on wifely and parental chores to the hired worker, the female employer maintains the role of the "good housekeeper" while exercising supervision over the worker, enjoying leisure time, and meeting the contradictory expectations society holds of the middle-class woman. Paralleling gender identities in Victorian England, the hiring of cleaners in English household in the 1990s has often been justified "by the parents' desire for 'quality time' with each other and their children to assist in their social, emotional and educational development" [*ibid.*: 19, 87]. The paid domestic worker thus facilitates the reproduction of social status as much as it does the reproduction of labor.

Conditions specific to late twentieth-century global capitalism account for the roles of waged domestic workers in servicing a broad range of middle-class lifestyles in Western economies. Female migrant workers are especially valued as private caregivers who are expected to nurture a "special" relationship with those they look after, making them an affordable source of commodified care whose devotion to the family member is deemed superior to what is obtainable in a crèche or old people's home. Migrant workers not only step into the breach created by the retreating welfare state under the onslaught of neoliberal policies, but offer exemplary services wealthy private employers can buy from the labor market. Unlike the earlier form of servanthood in Western Europe that relied upon local rural-to-urban and transregional migrations, the new labor market of domestic workers is supplied by global migratory flows, with origin states taking an active part in labor export. Moreover, unlike the late eighteenth century, today's global migrants perform domestic work not as a stage in the lifecourse prior to marriage but as a full-time occupation. Mature-age migrant workers are engaged in this occupation for many years, for some until the end of their working life, such that the married pass on the rearing of their own children to others in the homeland or the single diminish their chances of ever finding a partner. Despite years in paid domestic service, migrant women never attain the status of "professionals," and the occupation itself often escapes state regulation as in ages past.

However, in the 1970s, before postindustrialism became manifest in Europe and as historians declared that the domestic servant had disappeared in the middle-class household, a form of hired domestic work rendered by migrants was already in evidence in the *au pair* system. In the guise of cultural exchange formalized by an agreement in

Strasbourg in 1969, this system permitted young persons (mostly females) from selected south and east European states to learn a foreign language by living with host families, helping in housework, and earning some pocket money [*ibid.*: 23–24]. The *au pair* is not considered a worker, can work legally for limited hours per week only, and is not covered by social security laws. In reality, *au pairs* work full days and in household situations where they are not accorded equal treatment. The *au pair* system has been used to recruit migrant workers from the Philippines [*ibid.*: 24], thereby devaluing domestic work as a transitory exercise in cultural exchange and positioning the country oddly as an extension of Europe.

Paid Domesticity in East and Southeast Asia

For very similar reasons as in Western economies but with the transformation coming about in a compressed timeframe, the newly industrializing economies of East and Southeast Asia have witnessed the widespread employment of foreign domestic workers from the Philippines, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Thailand and other countries. Japan is rather exceptional in its very minimal hiring of paid domestic workers. This situation is probably due to the institutionalized barriers to women's full-time formal employment, the restricted space of Japanese dwelling units, problems of communication with foreigners, and the expense of hiring a “governess,” the term used by one employer-informant who hired one so her children could learn English. Migrant women's contribution to social reproduction in Japan comes mainly in the form of employment as “entertainers” of men, which in many, but not all, cases includes the provision of commodified sexual encounters.

In industrializing Asia, particularly Hong Kong and Singapore, overnight wealth would appear to have rekindled an old practice once possible only for the wealthiest of households but now affordable to large segments of the emerging middle classes. However, the hiring of migrant domestic workers is not a mere penchant from the past but an unprecedented structural necessity. As state-led growth brought educated women into the workforce in large numbers, assistance was needed for childcare and housework. But help could not be expected from the extended Chinese household that, given limited housing spaces, ceased to be feasible. Concomitantly, “traditional” sources of domestic workers began to dry up as factory work began to offer alternative employment to the less educated local women. Because of these economies' small population base and absence of a hinterland, surplus labor was internally not available. Moreover, domestic service began to be eschewed by locals as an undesirable, low-status, poorly paid, and even stigmatized, occupation. At the same time, employers began to feel disenchanted with “traditional” domestic workers, generally older women who had set views regarding household practices that conflicted with those of their younger generation employers.

Many of the continuing local domestic workers also realized that the labor shortage could be turned to their favor, and began to limit the tasks they performed. As Nicole Constable [1997: 28] has recounted, by the 1970s Hong Kong employers began to feel that “the ‘Chinese servants’, or amahs (paid domestic workers) were ‘not as good as they used to be’” and “complained about how domineering and demanding Chinese domestic workers had become.” In 1973 the Hong Kong government allowed the entry of foreign domestic workers, initially to cater to the expatriate community, but in no time migrant women were meeting the demand of middle-class Chinese households that wanted workers who could communicate in English. Among other countries, the Philippines was well suited to provide the “modern” labor force required in domestic work.

Thus, the hiring of foreign workers has become indispensable in nucleated middle-class households in order to allow employer-women to pursue careers as professional wage earners [Hing 1996]. As in Western economies, migrant women are integral to economic production and social reproduction in Asia’s industrializing economies, and ultimately to global capitalism. The prevalence of domestic work, though a seeming throwback to ancient times, is an indisputably modern component of capitalist relations. In Malaysia the hiring of migrant domestic workers from the Philippines and Indonesia has been encouraged since the 1970s, despite their then illegal status, specifically to impress upon the public the successful attainment of the state’s economic-racial objectives, which sought the upward socioeconomic mobility of Malays vis-à-vis Chinese. With no Malays needing to work in the subservient position of servant in a Chinese household, all races would appear to be equal partakers of Malaysia’s modernity project [Chin 1998]. Still, the Malaysian state has stipulated certain requirements for eligibility to hire a foreign domestic worker: a benchmark income, a legal marriage certificate, and birth certificates of children in a nuclear household—the overt markers of a modern middle-class lifestyle to which the state sought to induct its citizenry.

The modernity of paid domestic work relies on the backwardness of exploitation legitimated by patriarchal biases, but also on the novelty of working parents and spouses. The new social relation between employer and migrant worker breeds tensions and frictions for both parties, as it once did for the then new middle classes of England and France for whom manuals were created to deal with the “servant problem” [McBride 1976: 19]. As Constable’s [2002] study of Hong Kong reveals, the employment of Filipina domestic workers generates frictions and insecurities. Many female employers regard migrant women as promiscuous and potential seducers of their husbands, resulting in a behavior pattern that seeks to rein in migrant workers to conform to the debased role of “amah.” In effect, female employers deflect the mistrust that might legitimately be directed at their husbands. Anxieties about morality and sexuality, Constable adds, also stem from employers’ discomfort over Filipina migrants’ high levels of education. Mothers may also compete with hired workers over the emotions of children, who spend more time with the domestic worker than the working parent. Female employers’ jealousy,

which impels them to discipline foreign domestic workers, is symptomatic of the difficulty they encounter in controlling their husbands' fidelity, their children's affection, and other aspects of their everyday world.

The complaints that attend the hiring of migrant labor notwithstanding, the apparent backwardness of domestic work is also the very source of social status for the employer. By hiring a foreign domestic worker as an item of conspicuous consumption and an emblem of one's "sense of distinction" [Bourdieu 1984], the insecure middle classes can adduce claims to the lifestyle of those who have "arrived." In Singapore, households must have an annual income of over S \$30,000 to be entitled to employ a domestic worker. Although the state-driven Singapore Dream stipulates the three "Cs"—car, condominium, club membership—those who cannot "upgrade" to this standard, and continue to live in public housing estates, can nonetheless qualify for the dream's watered-down version by being serviced by a foreign domestic worker [Hing 1996: 45–46]. While in today's Europe migrant domestic workers reproduce middle-class status, in Asian contexts such as those typified by Singapore the hiring of migrant women provides a form of reassurance, an overt signal that one has met the bare minimum standard of middle class existence. But the hiring of migrant workers by the new rich in industrializing Asia is a reminder of nineteenth-century England and France where *nouveau riche* "employers used servants to emphasise their own social position," impelling them to demand the observance of social rules of deference [McBride 1976: 25].

As evinced by the wage structure, the reproductive and status-boosting utility of migrant domestic workers would seem to be non-uniform, for the general pattern of wages is determined by the migrant women's nationality. In a labor market segmented by intra-Asian preferences and prejudices, remuneration follows a hierarchy of national stereotypes. In Singapore, Filipina domestic workers are ranked at the top, Sri Lankans at the bottom, Indonesians somewhere in between, with all of them unassailably beneath the Singaporean employer [Huang and Yeoh 1998]. In Hong Kong the hierarchy of wages, often below the legal minimum wage, places Filipinas at the top, followed by Sri Lankan women, and then by Indonesian and Nepali women, with Indian women at the bottom of the continuum [Cheng 1996: 118]. In Malaysia the wage hierarchy and labor market segmentation is state-mandated: to employ a Filipina worker with a monthly salary of RM 500, the household's annual income must be at least RM 48,000; to hire an Indonesian worker with a salary of RM 300–330, household income must reach RM 24,000 [Chin 1998: 88]. Akin to the social segregation and racial division of labor of colonial Malaya, Filipina workers, who are mostly Catholic, are channeled to Chinese employers while Indonesian workers, who are Muslims, find their way to fellow Muslim Malay employers. Income disparities and labor market mechanisms, more than religion, are responsible for this segmentation, as suggested by protests aired in 1991 by both Malays and non-Malays that led to the setting aside of a regulation meant to ensure the religious purity of Muslim domestic workers and employers [*ibid.*: 88–91].

The wage hierarchy of domestic workers in Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia has an analogue in contemporary Europe, where wage stratification indicates a ranking of workers by national origin, in a system that intersects broadly with racist concerns and national stereotypes. Although the wage hierarchy varies from city to city, Filipinas are generally at the top and blacks from parts of Africa at the bottom [Anderson 2000: 152–153]. In some cities such as Athens, Poles earn as much as Filipinas, while Albanians and Ukrainians are low on the hierarchy, suggesting that skin color per se is not the sole factor in the stereotype-laden salary scale. Filipinas' knowledge of the English language, their cultural and linguistic adaptability, their historically sharpened predilection to things modern, their convivial and hardworking character, and the relative strength, bargaining power, and informational, institutional and other resources of formal and informal migrant networks place them among the highest paid domestic workers worldwide. The material and personal rewards to overseas employment, however, do not diminish the fact that work in this occupation replicates iniquitous national and gender disparities, the prejudices of race, and the exclusionary practices against non-citizen migrants. As in the past, the spectacle of non-migrant “rich women” using, if not exploiting, the labor of migrant “poor women” suggests that, ultimately, the nexus of class relations, within and across states, are deeply implicated in the contemporary global practice of paid domestic work.

“National” Class Structures in the Global Economy

Notwithstanding the interconnectedness of the global economy and the physical bodies of alien workers that visualize the transboundary interpenetration of labor forces, class structures remain stubbornly “national” in their imagery. On the base of preexisting national identities, the re-nationalization of class structures is largely orchestrated by participating states that directly regulate, control, promote, and profit from migrant labor. However, the reality is that class relations that are seemingly confined to nation-states have been configured jointly by domestic as well as global and transnational forces. Contemporary capitalism, it can be further argued, has crystallized a global underclass a principal feature of which is its huge deficit in citizenship rights [cf. Heisler 1991]. The political exclusion of economically integral migrant workers appears “natural” as the limits of citizenship rights are legitimated by the ideology of national belonging [Aguilar 1999].

In the destination-states the global underclass of domestic servants, construction and factory workers, and menial day laborers is composed of many ethnicities and nationalities. Their heterogeneity is no obstacle to their classification and easy identification as aliens, whose political segregation is mandated, imposed and enforced by the state. In various Asian contexts these states intrude into the private sphere by ruling on migrants'

sexualities, such as forbidding pregnancies among migrant women. Often feared as troublemakers and transgressors of the “host” society’s moral order, they are nonetheless unavoidably allowed into the privacy of homes where their labor services are needed. They are socially marginal yet paradoxically intimate strangers to the people they serve [Aguilar 2002a: 10]. Physical and socioeconomic integrality to the destination-state notwithstanding, their non-membership in the imagined community renders non-citizen migrant workers irremediably foreign and, as such, outside its class structure.

Unless imbued by some universalist ideal as those held by some Christian and human rights organizations, hardly would local NGOs see migrant workers as their constituents. Generally, migrant workers are seen as the responsibility of their “home governments” and of NGOs organized by migrant-leaders themselves or by migrants’ own co-nationals. Exclusion by the “host” and the migrants’ own sensibilities canalize most migrant worker networks and associations within the modular boundaries of the nation. Cross-national linkages do exist—such as Hong Kong’s Asian Migrant Coordinating Body, a coalition of domestic workers from India, Indonesia, Nepal, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Thailand that in February and March 2003 protested against a wage cut of HK\$400 per month (11 percent of the minimum) and a levy on foreign workers [Micaller 2003a; 2003b]. But the Hong Kong alliance is exceptional. The broad conclusion is that the global underclass is far from constituting a class for itself, and state restrictions on political activities in most places other than Hong Kong ensure that cross-national solidarities do not flourish.

Amid the challenges and deprivations of living in another land, migrant workers predictably fall back on co-nationals for succor and companionship. When confronted with verbal violence against their person—aspersions are often cast in national terms: “Filipinos are dogs,” “Filipinas are stupid”—their defense of the self invariably stands by national honor and deepens national identification [Aguilar 1996]. The global workplace thus reinforces the national identity of migrant workers. At the same time, higher status migrant workers, often termed expatriate professionals to denote their more privileged position, exert every effort not to associate with low-status migrant workers even if they share the same national origin. Middle-class status distinctions and cultural differences that mark the national homeland are replicated overseas, resulting in the fragmentation of overseas Filipino communities. Internal divisions and other factors cause the migrant’s children’s relationship to the parental homeland to be extremely complex and unpredictable [Aguilar forthcoming]. However, the inequalities of the homeland, precisely because of their transportability, all the more underscore the “national” character of the class structure. Filipino class relations seemingly migrate and, even overseas, appear innately Filipino.

In the destination-states the “national” class structure gives the impression of being clearly demarcated from migrant workers. Because migrants tend to take up occupations that are least desired because of their association with dirt, risk, and low pay, even the least of the destination-state’s “national” proletariat see themselves as lucky, for they do

not have to endure separation from kin and kith only to find miserable jobs. The receiving state's sense of nationhood is also refurbished vis-à-vis foreign workers who constitute the "new outsiders." In Malaysia, the religious imagined community gives way to the national community as Muslim Malays perceive a closer affinity with Chinese and Indian Malaysians than with Muslim migrants from Bosnia, Indonesia and Nigeria [Hing 2000]. Ultimately, destination-state elites, their nationalist ideologies and distinctive authoritarian regimes, strengthen their legitimacy in the eyes of even their poorest citizens. The migrants' political marginality reinforces the national sentiment of the destination-state's citizen workforce, at the same time that the national identity of workers displaced from their homelands is strengthened. The circulation of labor in the current epoch of globalization refurbishes the national identity of both non-migrant and migrant populations.

In an origin-state such as the Philippines, labor migrants are constituted as extensions of the "national" economy of an effectively deterritorialized state, but without rights of extraterritoriality. As the nation's external appendages, migrant workers dramatize the country's transborder political economy. The "enlargement" of the state through labor export is promoted, regulated and sustained by the state for its pecuniary advantages. And because individual migrants also benefit from overseas employment, the official policy has resulted in a substantial (but by no means exact) congruence of migrant labor and origin-state interests. In deploying its citizens worldwide, there is a sense in which the national geo-body moves along with the bodies of migrants [Tadiar 2002]. Despite agitation in the homeland, the pragmatics of state sovereignty constrain the sending, therefore weaker, country from extending "full protection" to its citizens overseas. Political emasculation, however, does not hinder the origin-state from reaping economic benefits from migrants' toils and exertions. The billions of dollars migrants remit to the Philippines significantly prop up the national economy amid global downturns and internally generated crises. Migrants' remittances have shored up the country's gross international reserves, making up for the decline in Philippine exports in the wake of the world economy's slowdown in recent years.

According to *Migration News* [2002], total worldwide remittances (the sum of workers' remittances, compensation of employees, and migrants' transfers) have reached US \$70 billion in 1995, a gargantuan jump from a baseline figure of less than US \$2 billion in 1970. The 1995 estimate has been described as exceeding official development assistance from OECD countries to the developing world and surpassing total foreign direct investment of U. S. companies in emerging markets [Frank 2001]. Given this bonanza, it is not surprising that peripheral states should deliberately send out its citizens like an army of gleaners around the world. These origin-states have adopted public policies to encourage migrants to send remittances through channels that are relatively easy, cheap, and secure. Not only have these states relied upon the usual remittances but they have also sought investments by (former) citizens or their descendants, as China has done and

the Philippines is seeking to emulate. The large-scale displacements of people orchestrated by imperial powers in times past and recent accretions to migrant populations have become crucial instruments by which former colonies and neo-colonies have cornered and appropriated a portion of the global surplus, buoying up, if not accelerating, internal processes of capital accumulation. Through transborder migrations, peripheral states renegotiate their participation in the global economy.

Remittances signal the importance of culture-specific norms of social reproduction in different parts of the global economy. Because labor in the periphery is reproduced at a lower cost than in advanced economies, the latter's utilization of migrant labor at relatively low rates compared to local citizens due to national-racial factors indicates a considerable subsidy from the less to the more advanced economy. But to the extent that migrant labor wage rates are respectably higher than comparable rates in the origin, migrant labor derives a certain "windfall" in individual returns to labor. This individual advantage is realized only because migrant workers follow different cultural norms of subsistence from those of their destination and because the major costs of social reproduction are expended in the peripheral economy, the homeland being the site of "cheaper" consumption. The difference between wages and overseas survival costs makes a modicum of personal savings and remittances possible, minus the costs of job searches, international travel and overseas living expenses shouldered by the migrant worker. A calculus of this difference is an important aspect of the migration decision. The capacity to remit, if individually small but collectively a fortune, is what labor-sending states exploit, control and coopt.

Globally, sites of production, although transnationally integrated, are fragmented and visually occluded from sites of consumption. This spatial disjuncture is observable not only in the case of transnational corporations but also among migrants and their networks. Transnational commodity fetishism, which undergirds transborder labor migrations, magnifies the mystification of capitalism. The low-status migrant in the overseas production site is transformed into a relatively high-caliber consumer of modernity in the homeland. The migrant's functionality to the employer's middle-class existence in the advanced economy enables the migrant's household in the origin-state to move up along the continuum of the middle classes. The two geographically separate poles of middle-class existence are linked in the person of the migrant worker. In tandem with material gains, the migrant's symbolic capital is boosted as she or he is made a model of success in her/his locality of origin. While working overseas, awaiting the eventual return to the natal land, the labor migrant soothes the pains and challenges of social liminality and physical dislocation with the balm of commodities and commodity consumption [Aguilar 2002b]. At the end of the day, the allure of commodity fetishism and the joys of money, which traverses space and differential currency exchange rates, legitimate overseas employment and the sending state's strategy. They also serve to legitimate global capitalism.

Transnational Agrarian Class Relations

In the homeland, therefore, migrants' households experience some degree of upward mobility even if observers lament that remittances are frequently spent on "unproductive" activities, such as house repair or construction, children's education, and daily subsistence. Education, however, can be considered an investment that yields returns in the future and opens doors to social mobility, not infrequently through overseas migration of other family members. In the near term, studies suggest that, at the local level, the inflow of migrant remittances, while improving income levels of some households, tends to worsen village inequality. But the local economic pie enlarges marginally, and the national cumulatively.

Overseas remittances significantly complicate the hybrid forms of class relations and overlapping circuits of exploitation that make and define class structures in rural Southeast Asia [Aguilar 1989; Turton 1989]. In an agrarian setting, the peasant's daughter who works overseas, say as an "entertainer" in Japan, may send remittances that enable the household to not only overcome what Henry Bernstein [1981] calls the "simple reproduction squeeze," but to experience significant upward social mobility. Studies by Cynthia Bautista [1989] in a village in Pampanga and by Nobuhiko Fuwa [1996; 1999] in a village in Pangasinan attest to dramatic transformations of formerly small tenant and irregularly employed households due to overseas remittances. Although some of them used remittances in fleeting consumption, others invested in such assets as land and agricultural machinery. Thus remittances may transform a tenant-farmer household, first of all, into a capitalized peasant cultivator, with secure access to land and the ability to afford farm inputs, consequently not needing to pawn one's possessions [cf. Nishimura 1996]. But remittances may also transform the peasant into a petty capitalist employer of farm labor. The peasant may rely primarily, or even completely, on hired hands to cultivate the land, freeing the farm owner to derive cash income from waged work elsewhere or to engage in a small enterprise such as driving one's own pedicab. Through monetary infusions, migrants' overseas employment in manufacturing or services industries may directly stimulate peasant capitalism and rural micro-capitalist industry. Remittances promote as well as complicate hybrid class formations in the migrant's origin even as a global underclass forms a structural adjunct to the class structure in the destination.

Another part-peasant capitalist and part-wage earner may sell whatever assets are owned, including land and carabao, to "capitalize" the sojourn overseas. This person may become a member of the global proletariat by joining, for instance, the multiethnic transnational construction industry. In time personal capital accumulation may allow the migrant to return to the homeland, the savings invested, say, in acquiring a vehicle

for use in a taxi business, which allows the former migrant proletariat to be transformed into a self-employed, joining the ranks of the urban petty bourgeoisie. (Or if the former part-peasant capitalist fails to accumulate personal capital, the migrant may return to the origin and eke out a livelihood from the “informal sector” by taking up casual work, say, as a jeepney driver.) In cases where remittances go largely to finance children’s education or defray the costs of daily sustenance, overseas remittances nonetheless “capitalize” and “modernize” the rural economy that, in the process, is directly imbricated with the contradictions of global capital accumulation. In addition, some transnational migrant networks have been engaged in the provision of development assistance to their origin-localities; by pooling their resources, organized migrants step into the breach not met by the homeland state or international aid agencies [Portes 2000]. Migrant-funded projects in health care and minor public works, for instance, have brought the celebrated case of Pozorrubio in Pangasinan province into the limelight [Frank 2001]. Needless to say, migrant labor gets but the crumbs of global capital. Still, the crumbs go a long way in transforming the periphery.

An interesting case of agrarian capitalism and rural social reproduction across state borders is discussed by Nobue Suzuki [2002]. Due to a scarcity of marriageable women arising from internal rural-to-urban migration, a local government in Japan initiated in 1985 a cooperative agreement with a counterpart entity in the Philippines for the supply of Filipina brides. The migration of brides has served as a type of gendered labor recruitment to ensure the survival and continuity of the *ie* or rural household system in depopulated villages. Through “international marriages” the *ie* is supplied with the requisite female labor for both farm and household. Migrant women are desired for their fecundability and labor power, creating a complicated social arrangement in rural Japan while altering social relations in the rural Philippines. The points of articulation in global migrations are thus not limited to urban centers but also involve transboundary rural-to-rural linkages and class transformations.

The State as Antagonist of Migrant Labor

Destination-states realize the structural significance of migrants in supplementing and complementing the labor power of their own citizens, making the importation of foreign labor an indispensable component of these states’ economic strategies. Migrant workers are especially useful because of their paucity of citizen rights; in many of these states they have no recourse even to nominal labor legislation. Although geographic movements have been a standard feature of human history, the borders of today’s stronger states are deliberately made either porous or impenetrable to migrant labor as the need arises. Needless to say, the rights of states supersede the rights of migrants. Notwithstanding UN declarations that promote global citizenship via the catholicity of human

rights, states retain the right to set the conditions under which foreigners and non-citizens enter and reside in their territory. In the Asian region, destination-states willfully ignore the ILO Convention on the rights of migrant workers, which specifies that, after two years, “guest” workers are entitled to family unification and a full range of benefits, including the right to stay [Aguilar 1999]. On the contrary, restrictive actions and policies of labor-receiving states transpose the oppositional relationship between capital and labor into a new axis of opposition between state and migrant labor. Especially because employers and illegal migrants may desire extra-legal labor recruitment, economic contradictions become political in the first instance.

Although destination-states are in a stronger position vis-à-vis origin states, no overt bullying occurs. Geo-politics and economic interdependencies constrain labor-destination states from acting as if they were a superordinate power over labor-sending states. In Southeast Asia, states have been cautious not to strain bilateral relations, as witnessed in Singapore’s caning of illegal Thai workers in 1989 and its execution of convicted Filipina migrant Flor Contemplacion in 1995. Instead of fomenting controversies over migrant labor, origin and destination states have modulated their actions and responses for the sake of mutual political and economic ends. Even the expulsion of undocumented Indonesian and Filipino workers in Malaysia in August 2002 was conducted with sufficient advanced notice, and the controversy over the repatriation process, albeit flawed, has not been allowed to blow out of proportion [INQ7.net 2002]. Within ASEAN, state actions are geared toward the mutual accommodation of interests.

Pursuing its own institutional agenda, the Singapore state has turned migrant labor into a multimillion-dollar state monopoly by imposing a monthly levy on the hiring of different types of foreign labor. In the case of domestic workers, the monthly levy in 1999 was S\$345 (up from S\$330 in 1996); with an estimated 70,000 households employing domestic workers, Singapore generates an annual revenue of about S\$289.8 million. Amid the economic downturn and a gaping deficit of HK\$7 billion, Hong Kong has imitated Singapore by imposing a levy of HK\$400 per month starting October 2003, which will yield an annual revenue of HK\$1.152 billion based on an estimated 240,000 foreign domestic workers. While the labor-sending state benefits only indirectly from the overseas deployment of its citizens, Singapore and Hong Kong gain directly from the “foreign maid industry.”

Avowedly protecting its overseas citizenry and faced with a drastic reduction in remittances (as, on top of the levy, huge wage cuts also begin in April 2003), the Philippine government lobbied against Hong Kong’s wage cut and levy measures, but to no avail [BusinessWorld 2002; Lema 2003; Micaller 2003b]. In protest the Philippines has temporarily suspended the official deployment of domestic workers to the territory. It is also forming a broad alliance of labor-sending states with India, Indonesia, Nepal, Thailand and Vietnam to obtain a reversal of Hong Kong’s decision [INQ7.net 2003b]. Whether a multilateral initiative—akin to a migrant labor cartel but organized by states—will

succeed remains to be seen. But this case highlights that relations between state and migrant labor are, despite economic realities, political in the first instance. In pursuit of their own economic interests and with an eye at domestic politics, labor-origin states appear to coalesce on behalf of their dispersed citizenry, seeking to succeed where multinational worker alliances have failed. In the end, the home government would seem the last bastion of migrant labor. Amid this circuitous conflict, the nation-state defends its legitimacy within and outside its borders.

Beyond Hong Kong migrant workers continue to toil under conditions dictated by the destination-state. In Singapore, the monthly levy often exceeds the monthly monetary remuneration received by the domestic worker, but the Philippines has not protested. There the total wage bill shouldered by the employer is the sum of the worker's (cash and non-cash) salary and the government levy. The state apparatus wields its power as it expropriates and appropriates the "surplus product" generated by the migrant worker and, given the levy's disproportionate share of total wages, even claims a part of the migrant worker's "subsistence fund." In this context, the state-qua-capitalist is in direct contradictory relationship to migrant labor, a novel type of transborder class relation between a territorial state and the non-citizen workers admitted to its territory. The destination-state thus occupies vis-à-vis the migrant worker the dual position of political overlord and state capitalist exploiter. If even multinational corporations, local enterprises, and household employers have no recourse but to comply with the dictates of the sovereign state, what can migrant labor do?

Conclusion

The tighter interconnectedness of the uneven global economy and various economic liberalization measures dating to the 1970s have rekindled old forms of labor processes. Whether in seafaring or domestic work, labor relations involving migrant workers suggest conditions peculiar to late twentieth-century capitalism. Old labor forms have become indispensable in the economic strategies of states and, at the social group level, in the making, assertion and maintenance of social class and status positions across state boundaries. Middle-class lifestyles and labor forces stratified by nationality are reproduced and propped up by a global underclass of politically disenfranchised non-citizen workers. Unlike in the past, interstate relations are directly implicated in the transborder movements of labor. Origin-states are at the forefront of labor recruitment and deployment because migrant workers' remittances sustain their economies and allow them to negotiate the treacherous waters of global capitalism. On the other hand, destination-states protect their institutional interests and ensure legitimacy by either relaxing or tightening immigration rules; by allowing labor in-migration, these states facilitate the pursuit of neoliberal policies as they retreat from the provision of social welfare mea-

tures. In the origin, migrant remittances widen village-level inequality, but also radically alter household conditions in ways that stimulate agrarian economies and reproduce hybrid class relations. While creating multi-stranded transnational linkages, the global labor market simultaneously deepens the national sentiment of migrant and non-migrant populations. Remaining entrenched is the perception that class structures are national formations. Despite glimmers of cross-national alliances, state strictures and portable nationhood do not augur well for cosmopolitan solidarities.

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